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### **ECONOMIC GROWTH**

**(Energy and Environment)**

#### **Local Nestlé ties up with USAID to boost training of coffee farmers**

By MELODY M. AGUIBA

**(Source: Manila Bulletin News Online – 5/08/08)**

Nestlé Philippines has tied up with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on the training of coffee farmers in an aim to help raise supply of coffee which has a P2.5-billion (64,000 metric tons) market locally.

At present, the Philippines' largest coffee bean buyer Nestlé has started a coffee specialist training program for local governments' extension workers all over Mindanao and Visayas. This is under the Philippine Environmental Governance 2 (Ecogov2) project funded by the USAID.

Local government units (LGUs) that are sending their farm technicians to this program are Lebak, Kalamansig, and Senator Ninoy Aquino in Sultan Kudarat Province; Maasim and Kiamba in Sarangani Province, and Kidapawan City in North Cotabato.

"The trainees will in turn tutor some 15,000 coffee growers in their LGUs and help them improve the quality and market price of their produce," according to an Ecogov2-USAID statement.

Nestlé committed to buy all the production of the farmers going through the program for as long as it meets quality standards of the company.

"With a strong support system in place, the growers are confident that they can deliver," said Nestlé Agri-Services Head Zenon Alenton.

The LGU extension workers will further train 15,000 identified coffee farmers in their jurisdiction.

One of the essential aspects of the coffee production training is honing farmers' ability to select quality coffee beans. Other components of the program are coffee-based farming system; proper coffee growing, harvesting and processing that will ensure quality production of beans.

Ecogov2 has also been helping the coffee-growing LGUs implement their forest resource management programs in partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources

The coffee training program is just one of the components of Ecogov2 specifically under its enterprise development program. To be implemented over a five-year period, the project may need extension even after it is completed in 2010.

"There may be an extension because we still have many projects to accomplish," said Ecogov2 Spokesman Manuel G. Hizon.

USAID projects related to Ecogov 2 are Coastal REsources and Fisheries Conservation in the SuluSulawesi Marine Ecoregion, Environmental Justice Project, Fisheries Improved for Sustainable Harvest, Partnership for Biodiversity Conservation, Sustainable Cocoa Extension SERvices for Small holders Alliance for East Asia Region, and Transforming the Marine Aquarium Trade in the Philippines.